Triceratops had self-sharpening teeth

June 15 2015, by Alisson Clark

In "Jurassic World," kids visiting the Gentle Giants Petting Zoo get to ride on and feed a triceratops. Turns out that's not such a good idea: University of Florida researchers recently learned that the three-horned

dinos had self-sharpening teeth.

The discovery came about when UF mechanical engineer Greg Sawyer got a call from a paleontologist, who said that no matter how much he polished triceratops teeth before putting them under a microscope, he couldn't get them flat. Sawyer and his then-doctoral student Brandon Krick found that alternating layers of tissue in the teeth interacted to make them sharper rather than duller as they wore. That might have given triceratops and its relatives an advantage – because they could chew tougher plants than their competition, they had more food sources and territory available. The adaptation isn't just impressive for a prehistoric creature: It's more sophisticated than any surface humans have created, Sawyer says. The discovery could revolutionize how we design things that wear down, from shoes to tires.

So if you ever get a chance to ride a Jurassic World gyrosphere through a herd of triceratops, you'll definitely want to keep your hands inside the vehicle. They may be plant-eaters, but their teeth mean business.

Provided by University of Florida

Citation: Triceratops had self-sharpening teeth (2015, June 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2015-06-triceratops-self-sharpening-teeth.html